

# Fire crews, officials bicker over handling of Timp blaze

**By Laura Childers**  
Deseret News correspondent

**PLEASANT GROVE** — Firefighters and officials from several agencies involved in last week's 1,250-acre blaze on Mount Timpanogos angrily accused one another Thursday of irresponsible and uncoordinated communication during their struggle to contain the wildfire.

About 80 people attended an information session conducted by the Forest Service at Pleasant Grove Junior High School. A handful of area residents made comments during the meeting, but most of the discussion came from fire officials.

They spent much of the 2½-hour meeting giving examples of serious communications breakdowns, but seemed to agree in the end that lack of coordination had not hampered their ability to fight the fire.

"I don't think any of this contributed to spreading the fire," said Pleasant Grove Fire Chief Ray Newman. "It was too late by the time the first people got to it."

The fire was aggravated by low humidity, erratic winds and a 94-degree temperature. Within minutes it was out of control, they said.

Why then are fire officials so critical of one another?

"I think we're upset about the criticism from the public. We probably wouldn't have had this meeting if it weren't for the criticism," Newman said. "I think the people kind of stirred this up."

The fire, which officials say was probably caused by lightning, was reported at 10:49 a.m. Aug. 5 and it was not controlled until 10 a.m. Aug. 8. During the days that the blaze raged on, it came within a half-mile of several residences in the hills above Lindon and Pleasant Grove.

As homeowners watched efforts to douse it, they complained that firefighters were not doing enough to stop the blaze. A variety of rumors about slip-ups were passed around the communities.

Wally Shiverdecker, supervisor of Uinta National Forest, tried to dispel some of the rumors Thursday.

For example, some residents believed that officials had irresponsibly refused services Rocky Mountain Helicopter's offer to join the fight, but Shiverdecker said it would not have been safe to use the helicopter, because it was not equipped with a radio and helicopter foreman. The Forest Service had already ordered a properly equipped helicopter that was en route.

"At that time the offer from Rocky Mountain Helicopter was declined, it wasn't a matter of not wanting to use it. It just wasn't a safe thing to do."

Residents also complained that officials seemed stubborn in their refusal to use flame retardant.

Shiverdecker said that when there are not enough

ground crews to go in directly behind a retardant drop, flames fly back up.

"It really is not a practical thing to do in some cases. It wasn't a good tactic given the situation."

Help offered by residents was also declined, leaving homeowners feeling helpless and angry.

Forest Service Incident Commander Dick Buehler said using laymen to fight the blaze would have been dangerous. "We find that if we don't use trained and certified people, we have problems."

While officials found answers for most of the public criticisms, they could not explain their own charges against one another.

Frank Mills, public works director for Pleasant Grove and a volunteer fireman, was in charge of coordinating his city's efforts to battle the fire during fire chief's initial absence, and he was frustrated by the confusion among the various agencies.

"Pleasant Grove and Lindon were not notified until eight hours after the fire started that there was a command center. The command team was not communicating," he said.

One Pleasant Grove city worker who was stationed at a firefighters rest center said the confusion was maddening. "No one knew who was in charge. Those of us who were working with the city were wondering who was in charge. I had women waiting down there to take showers literally for hours wondering where they were supposed to be."

An Orem Fire Department worker said he called Pleasant Grove fire officials to offer his department's help about 25 minutes after the blaze was reported, but a Pleasant Grove dispatcher apparently said they did not need help, because the fire was under control.

"I really think there's a problem on turf protecting that needs to be forgotten about during a situation like that," he said.

Newman said he was never told that Orem had offered assistance. "I don't want any turf problems. We don't turn anybody's help down in Pleasant Grove," he said.

Lt. Gary Clayton, Utah County emergency management coordinator, said officials must act now to prevent future communications problems.

"As a result of this incident, we're going to pre-plan some communications procedures. It is this communications area that caused so much consternation on this fire. Our challenge is in coordination," he said. "We have some problems, and yet we have some of the better communications abilities in the state. They're just not in place. If we just go to sleep with our frustrations on this, it's going to happen again."

# Scout camp celebrating Const

**By Kellene Ricks**  
Deseret News staff writer

SPANISH FORK — With dust blowing and 13 cannons blasting, Gov. Norman Bangerter welcomed thousands of Scouts to "Rendezvous

Encampment."

The rendezvous, held in conjunction this year with the bicentennial celebration of the U.S. Constitution, celebrates the history and future of the United States.

"You are just as important to the

Constitution and future of this country as those men and women were who helped found it years ago," Bangerter told the thousands of Scouts assembled for the opening flag ceremony Thursday in a canyon east of Spanish Fork.

## Provo/Orem movie evaluations

*The Provo/Orem Media Review Commission weekly evaluates movies showing in the two cities. Commission members are appointed by the city councils, and their opinions are not necessarily endorsed by the Deseret News. For critical reviews of each new movie, watch for Christopher Hicks' reviews in the Deseret News Today section.*

		PROFANITY	NUDITY	SEX	VIOLENCE	DRUGS/ALCOHOL
Adventures in Babysitting	PG-13	some	none	some, implied language	very little, implied, shooting	none
Dragnet	PG-13	some	some, female partial	none	some, shooting, fist fight	very little
Full Metal Jacket	R	abundant	very little, female-full	brief, implied	abundant, graphic, verbal, bloody, emotional	none
Jaws The Revenge	PG-13	very little	none	brief, implied	abundant, graphic, bloody, shark mauling	none
LaBamba	PG-13	some	none	brief, graphic	very little, graphic, fist fight, female abuse	alcohol, some
The Living Daylights	PG	none	very little	none	some, shooting, fist fight, Bond-type warfare	none
The Lost Boys	R	abundant	some, female, full, upper	abundant, language	abundant, graphic, bloody, sucking blood, emotional	none
Maid To Order	PG	some	very little, female upper	very little, implied	none	very little
Robocop	R	abundant	brief, male rear, female upper	none	abundant, graphic, bloody, shooting, gore	some
Roxanne	PG	some	none	brief, implied	very little	some alcohol
Stakeout	R	some	some, male-full	brief, implied	some, graphic	none
Summer School	PG-13	some	brief, male rear	brief, implied, language, gestures	none	none
Superman IV: The Quest for Peace	PG	none	none	none	abundant	none

# Panasonic

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